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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: DETAILS OF TASHKENT SHOOT-OUT MURKY; GOU TYPICALLY MUM

11. (SBU) Summary: Uzbek law enforcement officers engaged in a "shoot-out" with a group of armed men in a downtown neighborhood of Tashkent on Saturday, August 29, at approximately 18:00 local time. The identities and affiliations of the armed men have not been confirmed. Contacts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs say that the group consisted of heavily armed Islamic extremists who had been planning to carry out terrorist activities in conjunction with the celebration of Uzbek Independence Day. However, other sources maintain that the armed men may have been criminals rather than religious extremists. As usual, the GOU has shared nothing officially.

FEW FACTS

12. (U) At approximately 18:00 on August 29, officers from both the City and National divisions of the Security Special Forces surrounded a private residence in the Kukcha-Darvoza neighborhood of Tashkent, near City Hospital Number One and the Kukcha mosque. In an exchange of gunfire between security forces and the occupants of the house, two or three armed men were killed, while two or three others escaped. One officer of the National Security Special Forces was killed, and at least two officers of the City Security Special Forces were wounded. Exact numbers of casualties on either side have not been confirmed.

MUCH SPECULATION

13. (SBU) According to a contact in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, law enforcement officials were aware that terrorist attacks were being planned at that particular location, and were closely monitoring five Islamic extremists who were staying there. After law enforcement officials surrounded the house, the occupants opened fire on them with submachine guns. Sources linked with human rights groups reported that, in the aftermath of the shooting, security forces blocked off the area and requested that the relatives of local religious convicts provide detailed statements about their whereabouts during the incident.

¶4. (SBU) On the other hand, local embassy employees noted that security measures taken in Tashkent over the holiday did not appear to be commensurate with a serious threat of terrorist attacks; for example, roads entering Tashkent were not blocked and vehicles entering Tashkent were not being checked any more than usual. Security forces were present in greater numbers, but were not carrying automatic weapons, as they do when they want to make a show of force.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The lack of reliable information about this incident has led to wild speculation about the nature of this gun battle. Some sources believe that the timing of the shoot-out may have been calculated to curry favor with President Karimov by showing him that the Special Forces are working hard and earning their salt at a crucial moment. In another conspiracy theory, a report from a local human rights activist group suggests that the shooting may have been "organized by law enforcement to show the existence of threat (sic) of terrorism and religious extremism." Rumors of other violence and disturbances taking place in Tashkent were also rampant, but are unsubstantiated.

NORLAND